

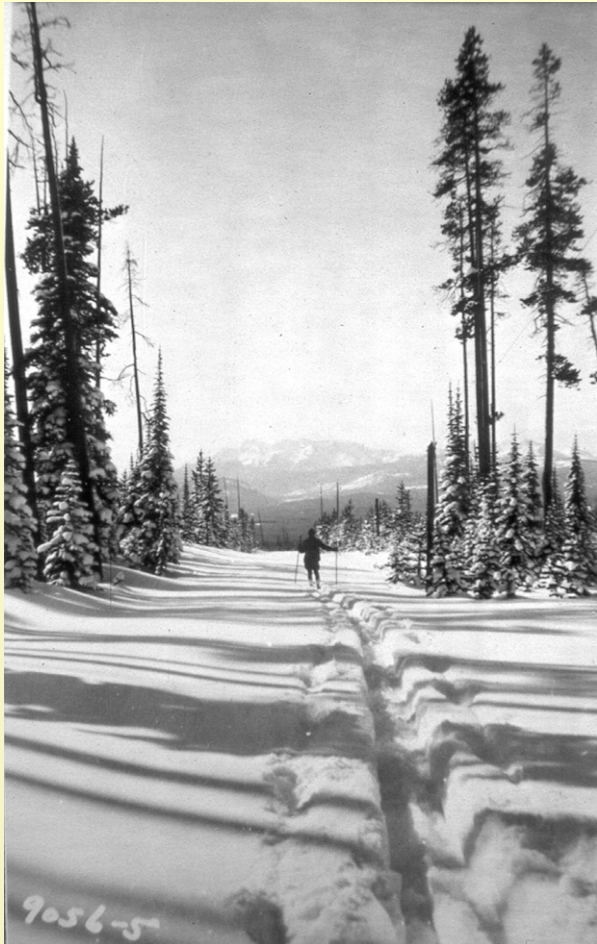
Update:
Yellowstone and Grand Teton
National Parks
Winter Use Planning



March 14, 2006, Bozeman; March 16, 2006, Jackson

Twelve times this issue has been debated, for almost 75 years

- What forms of use are appropriate in Yellowstone & Grand Teton in winter?



Era of Discovery

- 1932-67: five different requests to plow park roads.
- Meanwhile, first motorized oversnow vehicles enter YNP.



1949: Snowplanes



1955: Snowcoaches



1963: Snowmobiles

Developing a Winter Use Policy, 1967-82



- 1967 Congressional Hearing: Plow the roads?
- Decision: Favor Oversnow Vehicles, not automobiles.
- Groom the roads, 1971.
- Open first Old Faithful Snowlodge, 1971.



Increasing Recreation



- Rapidly increasing winter use in the 1980s and 1990s brought issues:
 - Air quality
 - Noise
 - Crowding
 - Wildlife
 - Employee & Visitor Safety

Historic Snowmobile Use



- No numerical limits (average of 795; peak days averaged 1400 snowmobiles)
- Guiding was about 15% (60% of south entries)
- All snowmobiles were 2-stroke (high levels of CO and HC; objectionable smell and noise)
- Park open 24-7

Legal Era



- Fund for Animals Lawsuit, 1997
- Bluewater Network Petition, 1999
- First EIS, 2000: Snowcoaches Only.
- Second EIS, 2003: Managed snowmobile use.
- Legal Decisions: Both 2000 and 2003 decisions remanded to the NPS.



An Era of Managed Use

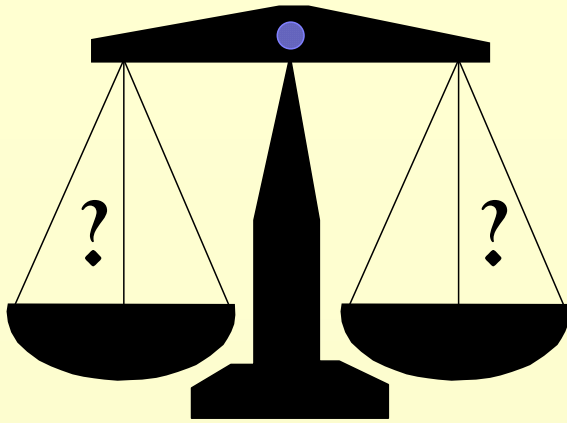
- 2002 Pilot Program
 - Nighttime use restrictions
 - Express Lane
 - Speed limits lowered
 - Increased NPS staff – law enforcement and interpretation
 - Increased grooming
- 2003 - 2004 winter
 - All snowmobiles commercially guided
 - 80% BAT
 - Limits on entries
- The 2004 Winter Use Plan



The 2004 Winter Use Decision



- 720 snowmobiles per day (in Yellowstone)
- All Best Available Technology (BAT)
- All Commercially Guided
- No nighttime use (9 pm to 7 am closure)
- 14 miles of sideroads are snowcoach only
- Reduced speed between West and Old Faithful
- Interim plan – ends March 2007



Current Legal Status

Lead Plaintiff	Federal Court	Outcome
Fund for Animals	Washington, D.C.	Pending
Save Our Snowplanes	Wyoming	Pending
Wyoming Restaurant and Lodging Association	Wyoming	Ruling in favor of NPS
Greater Yellowstone Coalition	Washington, D.C.	Ruling in favor of NPS

Monitoring is a key part of the 2004 Decision

- Soundscapes
- Air quality
- Wildlife, including human interactions
- Human health and safety (exposure of employees to air pollutants and sound)
- Pollution deposition in the snowpack
- Special Studies:
 - Bison/Road Interaction (Cormack Gates)
 - Snowcoach and snowmobile emissions (Gary Bishop)





Congressional Action

- In appropriations bills, Congress directed the National Park Service to implement the 2004 decision.
- This gives the 2004 decision the force of law, however...
- The appropriations language is effective through September 30, 2006.

Recent Visitation Via Snowmobile



2005-2006:

- For December 2005 and January 2006, an average of 259 snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone.

2004-2005:

- An average of 239 snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone, with a peak day of 424.

2003-2004:

- An average of 259 snowmobiles per day, with a peak day of 438.



A New Long-Term Winter Use Plan

- The 2004 Decision was only intended to guide winter management for three winter seasons. During this period, the NPS is preparing a long-term analysis on winter use in the parks.



Shared Stewardship

Collaboration and relationships with:

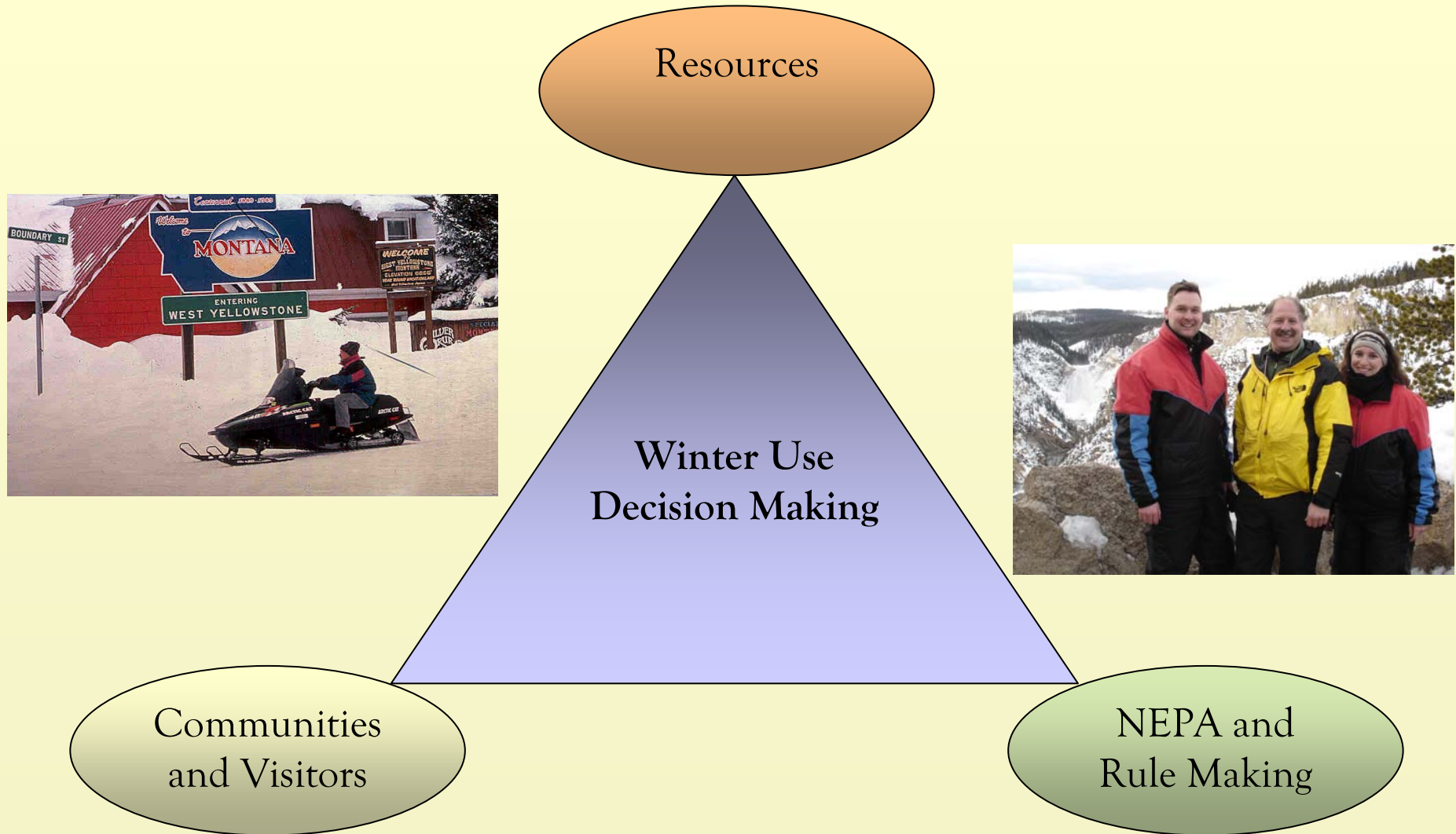
- Cooperating agencies
- Local communities and businesses
- Park visitors and the public
- Concessionaires
- Industry
- Conservation and other interest groups

Winter Use Goals Remain the Same

- Provide a high quality, safe, and cost effective winter experience for *all* visitors
- Mitigate impacts to wildlife
- Provide for employee health and safety
- Restore air quality
- Restore natural soundscapes
- Minimize adverse economic impacts to gateway communities



Building A Sustainable Future



Range of Scenarios Developed for Modeling



- Scenarios addressing concerns raised by Wyoming and DC District Courts
- Scenarios with varying limitations on snowmobile and snowcoach use to address concerns and prevent unacceptable impacts
- Critical elements of scenarios include:
 - Guiding requirements
 - BAT requirements for both snowmobiles and snowcoaches.
 - Sylvan Pass
 - CDST, Jackson Lake, Grassy Lake Road



Preliminary Alternative 1: Continue Temporary Plan

- 720 commercially guided BAT snowmobiles in Yellowstone per day
- 140 snowmobiles in Grand Teton per day
 - BAT generally required with exceptions
 - Commercial guiding not required
- BAT standards for snowcoaches
- Two Sylvan Pass options:
 - A.1. as current operations (open with avalanche control)
 - A.2. as closed

Preliminary Alternative 2: Snowcoaches Only



- 120 BAT snowcoaches per day would be authorized in Yellowstone
- Snowmobiles would be prohibited in Yellowstone and Grand Teton
- Sylvan Pass closed



Preliminary Alternative 3: Eliminate Most Road Grooming

- Yellowstone would stop grooming all oversnow roads, except South Entrance to Old Faithful.
- No snowcoach or snowmobile access on ungroomed roads.
- In Yellowstone:
 - 250 snowmobiles/20 snowcoaches allowed per day through South, all commercially guided and all BAT
- In Grand Teton:
 - 50 snowmobiles per day on Grassy Lake Road; CDST and Jackson Lake would be closed to oversnow vehicles

Preliminary Alternative 4: Expand Recreational Use



- Allows for increased snowmobile use relative to historic numbers.
- In Yellowstone:
 - 1,025 BAT snowmobiles/105 BAT snowcoaches in Yellowstone
 - 4.1 75% commercially guided; 25% non-commercially guided
 - 4.2 75% commercially guided; 25% unguided
 - Group sizes for non-commercially or unguided trips could change
- In Grand Teton:
 - Grassy Lake Road; unlimited BAT snowmobiles
 - 75 sleds on the CDST (non-BAT)
 - 100 BAT sleds on Jackson Lake



Preliminary Alternative 5: Unguided Access

- Balances snowmobile and snowcoach use and accommodates visitors who wish to have an unguided snowmobile experience.
- In Yellowstone:
 - 540 improved BAT snowmobiles allowed in Yellowstone, with 80% commercially guided and 20% unguided
 - 83 BAT snowcoaches allowed
- In Grand Teton:
 - 190 snowmobiles in Grand Teton
 - 75 snowmobiles per day allowed on CDST



Preliminary Alternative 6: Mixed Use

- Yellowstone's west-side roads would be plowed to promote more affordable winter access (Mammoth to West to Old Faithful).
- Continues to allow snowmobile and snowcoach use through the South Entrance and on east side roads.
- Oversnow and wheeled access would be commercially guided only.
- In Yellowstone:
 - 350 BAT snowmobiles/40 BAT snowcoaches per day in Yellowstone; no limits on wheeled vehicles.
 - Sylvan Pass closed to oversnow access.
- In Grand Teton:
 - 50 BAT snowmobiles on Grassy Lake Road, 40 on Jackson Lake.

Actions that may be common across alternatives:

- In Yellowstone:
 - A seasonal allocation to provide maximum flexibility to businesses to respond to visitors' demand on busy days, with daily entry limits, determined by a formula:
 - $[85 \text{ day season}] \times [\text{daily limit proposed under each alternative}] \times 75\% = [\text{total number of OSV allowed per season}]$
 - A possible stepped research design and experiment to investigate bison use of groomed roadways
- In Grand Teton:
 - 75 snowmobiles/day on Grassy Lake Road + 40 snowmobiles/day on Jackson Lake
 - CDST use levels considered
 - BAT requirements for Grassy Lake Road only apply if originating at Flagg Ranch

Public Engagement



“The NPS promise to governmental and non-governmental stakeholders is to open information sharing. We will actively listen to and acknowledge concerns. We will let you know where timely agency and public input was incorporated in the EIS, and how it did/did not influence NPS decisions.”

From: Public & Agency Information/Participation Plan
Yellowstone/Grand Teton Winter Use Planning
As of October 2005



Near-Term Actions

- Finalize what alternatives will be in the full EIS.
- Write EIS spring through summer, 2006.



Timeline for Completion

- Draft EIS for public review and proposed rule published: late-fall 2006
- Final EIS available and ROD signed: fall 2007
- Final rule published: late-fall 2007